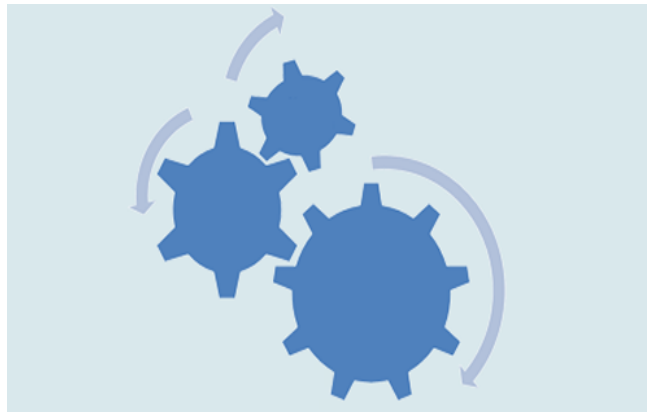




The Problem of Action

GTI Roundtable

December 2017



How can we envision a systemic global movement, and what initiatives can hasten its coalescence? Paul Raskin poses these and other essential questions, and our panel discusses the forms and structures of collective action necessary for building a decent planetary civilization in the twenty-first century.

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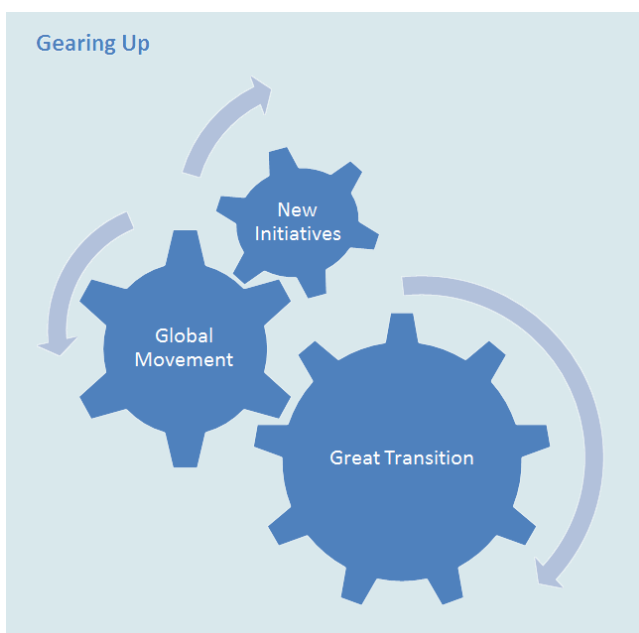
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How Do We Get There? The Problem of Action

Paul Raskin



Planetary Praxis Redux

In our time of unprecedented interdependence and existential risk, we face a common predicament and an uncertain destiny. As the global quandary deepens and awareness spreads, the conviction that root-and-branch social change is needed to circumvent perils and seize opportunities draws more and more of us. Reaching a flourishing future requires the revitalization of the basis of planetary civilization, a Great Transition in culture and institutions.¹

The vision of a better world beckons, but how do we get there? Although there are no easy answers, this much seems axiomatic: a systemic social force is needed to drive a systemic planetary shift. But what shape might such a force take, and how can we best nurture it?

Since its inception in 2003, GTI has taken up the question of historic agency, building on the work of its predecessor, the Global Scenario Group. We have had episodic exchanges on the critical role to be played by a popular global movement (a “global citizens movement”) in the Great Transition story, and some of us have experimented with building collaborative campaigns to foster it.²

But it's been a while. The times change, and so do we. More than ever, we need stronger answers to the still-burning question of action. This note summarizes core GTI ideas developed to date, in the hope of stimulating fresh thought and debate, and perhaps new initiatives.³

The Fourth Question

The conceptual framework for addressing this challenge rests on four pillars that address four associated questions: Where are we? Where are we going? Where do we want to go? How do we get there? These questions urge—in ascending degree of difficulty—critique of the existing order, analytic exploration of alternative global scenarios, normative visions of desirable outcomes, and collective action for shaping social evolution.

The good news is that solid progress is being made on the first three questions. Mainstream natural science and heterodox social science continue to clarify the character of the emerging world system, along with the underlying drivers of the multiple crises we face. Global scenario analysts are illuminating the contrasting worlds that might emerge from the branch point of the turbulent present. Social visionaries are sketching the contours of possible outcomes compatible with a global civilization of enriched lives, human solidarity, renewed communities, and a resilient biosphere.

A full exploration of this expanding body of work is beyond this note, but a summary in GTI's terminology can anchor the discussion.

Where are we? We have entered the *Planetary Phase of Civilization*, a profound historical shift binding people, places, and the wider community of life into a single, encompassing social-ecological system.

Where are we going? The future remains indeterminate and contested, but what is clear is that adhering to *Conventional Worlds* modes of development is risking, indeed already facilitating, an abrupt descent into some form of *Barbarization* scenario.

Where do we want to go? *Great Transition* scenarios envision redirection of the global trajectory toward a socially equitable, culturally enriched, and ecologically resilient *planetary*

civilization.

The bad news is the slow headway made in finding adequate answers to the most intractable question: **How do we get there?** For all the important work now underway, we have collectively fallen short of nurturing a systemic change agent matched to the task of planetary transformation. The search is still on for this critical actor missing from the global stage.

Framing Propositions

A few broad propositions have been fundamental to the GTI discourse on social agency. Although provisional and subject to revision, they provide a reference framework for maintaining coherence across the diverse perspectives and political passions that a discussion of transformative action is bound to prompt.

The challenge is at once plural and unified. The Great Transition of which we speak entails a systemic shift that manifests across a vast mosaic of themes, issues, and places. This sparkling heterogeneity urges an ecumenical change strategy that validates plural points of leverage under a canopy of unity. Taken together, the many forms of progressive action already underway from local to global scales could well be the harbinger of a systemic social agency.

Contemporary efforts are necessary but not sufficient. As never before, we need movements for justice, peace, and environment; global change science; education and awareness-building campaigns; and local sustainability efforts. Still, fragmented, dispersed actions cannot overcome the systemic deterioration that overwhelms piecemeal gains painstakingly won here and there. None alone can be a cure for structural social-ecological dysfunction, nor together can they add up to one. The many parts of a whole movement do not a holistic movement make.

A systemic transformation will take a systemic movement. The search for a social actor fit for purpose leads us to posit a vast cultural and political rising, a global movement attuned to the overarching project of shaping a thriving planetary future. Child of the Planetary Phase, it would stand as an explicit and proactive advocate for ushering in a form of planetary civilization fit for the twenty-first century.⁴ Like all consequential social movements, it would assert power culturally, by shaping ideas and behavior; tactically, through actions that disrupt the status quo;

and strategically, by building institutions for sustained political influence.

A social movement is not an organization. A social movement has multiple moving parts. According to Webster's Dictionary, it can be defined as a "heterogeneous group of people or organizations tending toward or favoring a generalized common goal." Thus, for example, civil rights, labor, and national movements have comprised multiple organizations, groups, and individuals working toward shared social goals in myriad cultural and political ways. A global movement for a Great Transition would evolve as a complex social ecology of formal and informal associations focusing on a thousand issues and approaches, operating from local to global levels and aligned by broadly shared values and vision.

A shared collective identity would overlay diversity. Such a diverse, polycentric movement would work on all fronts within an embracing project of transformation. As with all social movements, adherents would be bound together by a collective identity, in this case a sense of connectedness within a global community. They will be proto-citizens of the whole planet, the proto-global entity with no name, which I refer to as Earthland.⁵ Thus, the political and cultural rising that expresses this larger identity and promise would be, by whatever name, a "global citizens movement" (GCM).

The barriers to success are high. We need to acknowledge and confront the valid fears that darken hopes for the future. The fledgling GCM confronts the resistance of entrenched power structures, the counterforce of regressive ideologies, the drag of cultural inertia, and the jolts of macro-crises. Perhaps the biggest obstacle of all is the despair paralyzing so many potential comrades.

The game is still on. The only response to counter such barriers and pitfalls is to double down, buoyed by the one certainty about the future: surprise. Historian Howard Zinn reminds us: "We forget how often we have been astonished by the sudden crumbling of institutions, by extraordinary changes in people's thoughts, by unexpected eruptions of rebellion against tyrannies, by the quick collapse of systems of power that seemed invincible."⁶ With cards to play and still a chance to win the long game, it's too soon to fold.

The time is propitious. Objective and subjective conditions—the imperative to act in the face of business-as-usual perils and the desire for a convivial Earth community—are maturing. Historical possibility and human intention together underpin the prospects for a globalized mass movement: a popular front for Earthland. This movement grows ever more ready to be born, yet for now remains latent.

New initiatives are vital. Can the GCM crystallize at sufficient speed and scale? How can we best act to help mobilize a popular force attuned to the Great Transition challenge? If it is true that fortune smiles on the prepared, the odds of a favorable social pivot depend on preparing the ideological and organizational terrain now, before more and greater systemic crises strike. The urgent meta-challenge is to weave an integrated praxis as a cocoon for a mass GCM. As with past social transitions, as the time for change approaches, small proactive actions can carry large consequences. We need to consider new organizing efforts explicitly oriented toward nurturing a plural, united global movement.

The ends must animate the means. To earn legitimacy, efficacious initiatives need to ensure that the core principles underpinning their vision for the future infuse the mode of operation for getting there. In particular, movement campaigns need to find ways of balancing unity and diversity, of abjuring the extremes of top-down vanguardism and bottom-up spontaneity. Engaging a rapidly changing world and embracing new waves of participants requires an adaptive strategy and spirit of co-creation. Not least, we need to cultivate a *politics of trust* that tolerates proximate differences in order to foster ultimate solidarity.

What Next?

To summarize the core thesis, the coalescence of a powerful GCM would be the critical social innovation for driving a Great Transition. By forging a globalized community of fate, the Planetary Phase makes this rise historically plausible. We see precursors in the proliferating movements, organizations, and campaigns for a more just, resilient, and fulfilling world. The central challenge becomes how to embrace this diversity while bringing the nascent meta-movement fully to life.

Of course, not all will see it that way. The search for a systemic change agent will likely not

engage optimists confident that the system will self-correct, or, at the other extreme, pessimists despairing of change that can counter apocalyptic premonitions. Nor will it draw fellow travelers committed to reformist tweaks, or comrades certain they hold the key to the conundrum of transformation.

Let the rest of us—the concerned, hopeful, committed, and humble—revisit the challenge of collective action with fresh eyes. The frame of reference laid out here urges a renewed search for answers to the pressing question of transformative action: How can we envision a systemic global movement, and what initiatives can hasten its coalescence?

Endnotes

1. See Paul Raskin, Tariq Banuri, Gilberto Gallopín, Al Hammond, Pablo Gutman, Robert Kates, and Rob Swart, *Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead* (Boston: Tellus Institute, 2002), <http://greattransition.org/gt-essay>. Explanatory videos and other introductory materials can be found at www.greattransition.org.
2. Noteworthy here was The Widening Circle (TWC) that from 2010 to 2012 brought together GTI, Pachamama Alliance, Earth Charter, and a number of other groups and individuals. TWC emerged from discussions at an assembly (“The Synergizer”) with the aim of carrying forward the ideas introduced in my “Imagine All the People,” *Great Transition Initiative* (Boston: Tellus Institute, 2010), http://www.greattransition.org/archives/perspectives/Perspective_Imagine_All_the_People.pdf. “Imagine” was republished in *Development* and *Kosmos* (2011) and translated into Spanish, French, and German.
3. These ideas are explicated in Paul Raskin, *Journey to Earthland: The Great Transition to Planetary Civilization* (Boston: Tellus Institute, 2016), <http://www.greattransition.org/publication/journey-to-earthland>.
4. See *Journey*, 59–70, for a discussion of the historic preconditions and broad contours of a GCM.
5. Tariq Banuri, GTI co-founder, came up with this useful neologism.
6. Howard Zinn, “The Optimism of Uncertainty,” in *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen’s Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear*, ed. Paul Rogat Loeb (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

About the Author



Paul Raskin is the founding president of the Tellus Institute. In addition, he established the Global Scenario Group and the Great Transition Initiative. His work has focused on visions and strategies for a sustainable and just future. Toward that end he has pioneered widely-used models for integrated assessment, served as lead author on numerous international assessments, and published widely. Dr. Raskin holds a PhD in Theoretical Physics from Columbia University.



Roundtable



Kavita Byrd

Thank you again for initiating this, and inspiring us to keep going in our hopes for a better world. This kind of faith and persistence is the essential prerequisite for anything constructive to happen, and it is encouraging to see so many hanging in there—even doubling down—despite the obvious challenges.

I would like to share a few reflections on this important theme.

I. First, I think it's important to be willing to come to an agreement about the basic values and goals of the GCM, and not be shy about it being too "top-down." There would still be plenty of scope for creative implementation around these goals as individuals and groups, who agree with the basic values, come together to flesh it out. We want to bring together diverse interests and forces, and yet we cannot do this except around a nucleus of clearly stated, common, vital goals. Without this statement of clear values and intentions, action is also impossible, and will not get beyond being simply the "problem of action."

While it may look on the surface like the grievances of diverse groups are quite different, there are, in fact, certain root causes that are affecting us all—and, likewise, common solutions. I see it as a crucial part of this movement itself to help diverse groups recognize the deeper, common systemic root-causes behind their respective grievances—after all, we are all living in a common, now-globalized system of neoliberal capitalist, highly unsustainable, and inegalitarian patriarchy, geared to create a few big winners and many losers. The many losers, while they may be suffering in different ways, are suffering due to that same system and its life-destructive patterns. This system—based on separation and competition—itself fragments people, and prevents and distracts them from seeing their common cause. This is not a healthy or natural pluralism, but one that divides and conquers, defeating our private purposes as it obscures our collective ones.

We need both a systemic vision of what underlies our grievances and a systemic vision of what kind of system could serve our common interests—as well as the deeper understanding that only by coming together can we amass the power to change the patterns that are affecting us all. Only in that way can we succeed in realizing both our particular interests and our collective ones. This, I would say, is true pluralism, or unity-in-diversity, where the Whole serves the part, and the part serves the Whole, in the kind of creative synergy we find in healthy natural systems. If we cannot learn that by serving the greater cause, we also serve our own, then the only unity we will achieve is that of all going down together. Nature herself is driving this lesson home.

Diversity, or healthy pluralism, need not inhibit collective agreements, or collective action; in fact, it can bolster them. When we are in a “minority”—and all of us are in a minority, of some sort or other, because the human race is so diverse, with its race, gender, cultural, class, generational, etc., fault lines—we tend to scapegoat other minorities, pitting our interests against theirs. But instead, we could translate the pain we feel at the suffering of our own minority into empathy with the suffering other minorities also feel, and gather together with them in a larger meta-movement that transcends the opposition of interests to serve the interests of all.

In reality, we are all in this together, both the suffering of our apparent aloneness and the potential to join with others to overcome it, to see through the illusion of our separation. This is another kind of “identity politics”, where we come to identify with the Whole—not digging ourselves into a hole of our own isolation or oppression, but expanding our identity to include the entire, interconnected web of life, and the potential to realize that both in our own inner consciousness and in outer forms of action.

This is the kind of understanding we need to get out there, and which can also most powerfully serve as the basis of our own values, goals and action.

II. As I said, I think we need first to decide upon and to state clearly the common, irreducible values and goals of the GCM that can serve as a nucleus to attract already existing movements. All who agree to these values and goals, and can also see how these common goals further their own more specific goals, would probably be attracted to join in. (Each prospective group or member could be encouraged to identify whether and how in fact the stated goals do advance their own; this could strengthen their clarity and commitment, and willingness to reconcile with others later on over proximate differences, while strengthening the vision as a whole.)

Once we have clarified the basic goals of the movement, the next step would be to send along the proposal to major leaders already active in these directions, to invite them to participate in a guiding body. After that, we could send out the manifesto more generally, with these names behind them, to relevant groups and organizations by direct invitation, as well as the general public through social media, including Facebook, social activist petition sites, etc. If the manifesto is framed in an inspiring, clear, and attractive way, it could galvanize hope and vision not only among fragmented movements, but also among the many individuals around the world disaffected by the current dismal global direction, and ripe for a positive vision and structure to put their energy into.

Regarding the common, stated values/goals, I would say to keep it simple, especially to begin with. Consider, for example, the following five:

- **Ecological sustainability:** Moving towards maximum renewable energy globally in the minimum time possible. Instituting policies, on all scales, for the reclamation of the commons and the restoration of healthy natural ecosystems.
- **Cooperative, equitable economics:** Replacing the current neoliberal, deregulated capitalist global system with a cooperative, equitable system, serving people and planet rather than the bottom lines of the wealthy.
- **Social justice globally:** Providing equal social status, dignity, and opportunity for all to have their necessities met and to reach their highest potentials—from each according to their ability, and to each according to need—regardless of race, gender, nationality, religion, class, ethnicity, age, or disability.
- **Nonviolence:** In our own action and strategies. On the global scale, moving towards nuclear disarmament, the dismantling of the war machine and the weapons industry. Responding to violence with forms of restorative justice and reconciliation rather than retaliation.
- **Transforming Cultural Consciousness and Education** (interconnection, unity-in-diversity, co-creative synergy): The diffusion of certain universal spiritual principles, which can be framed in scientific rather than religious language, through our educational systems, as well as the general cultural consciousness via the media. These would include our interconnection through subtle

fields of energy and consciousness; our ecological interdependence with other life forms and natural systems; the need for cooperative, sustainable, equitable social and economic systems which reflect that; and an appreciation of unity-in-diversity, along with the skills of collective intelligence and co-creative synergy.

(Note that by “spiritual” here, I don’t mean any particular religious faith or doctrine, but giving cognizance to the subtle but pivotal domains of consciousness and energy underlying the physical world—their nature, effects, and power to shape our culture and systems. I also mean the wider context of ethics and telos that gives life greater meaning and direction than materialism and self-profit alone.)

Goals such as these, once agreed upon, could stand as the guiding credo, with, of course, room to evolve. As I suggested earlier, a facilitating body, composed of leaders with a proven track record of integrity and commitment to these values and goals, would be gathered to facilitate the movement, with appropriate checks and balances to assure that no one individual or faction takes over. The movement would then build, reaching out by direct invitation and through the social media, bringing together a wide range of groups and interests. Its aim would be to work towards a global people’s democratic government, including a worldwide voting system using a digital, co-creative platform on the Internet. This would not supplant local or regional democratic structures, but complement and coordinate them on globally relevant issues.

III. There seems to be an ongoing debate here about whether it is even necessary, desirable or possible, to create structures for an ongoing global movement. I personally believe that such structures are critical, and also a natural part of our evolution. I have even been wondering if the movement, to give it a more substantial form, could be framed as a “global people’s party,” e.g., the Global People’s Democratic Party, working towards a Global People’s Democratic Government? This would be more eye-catching than an amorphous movement, and likely to get more attention. The platform of the party would be similar to the values and goals I listed earlier. Like national parties, it would gather many diverse interests under one banner, with a clear, compelling, unifying platform.

Why a global party, or a global governing body? Our crises won’t go away on their own, or even through a random emergence of local movements. Unless we are looking to global interests, one nation’s (or region’s) interests will always be pitted against another’s, even assuming the best of

intentions of or for their own people. As we have seen, this does not work—divisiveness breeds divisiveness, as violence breeds more violence. We need to really grasp that only the good of the Whole (both people and planet) can serve the good of us all—and help put that into action. The reasons for this would be clearly expressed in the manifesto or platform.

In evolution, smaller, simpler units conglomerate into larger, more complex ones. We need to look at how this happens and, in the context of social systems particularly, how the new, larger conglomeration gains traction and legitimacy. We need to look back to past examples where the traction succeeded and the new potentials inherent in our present digitally interconnected context. Our high-tech capabilities exponentially heighten not only the dangers but also the positive possibilities of global interconnectedness.

Another related point. I hear the fear expressed again and again that a movement which starts off for the people will become rigid or dictatorial. This fear, like a bogeyman in the background, has effectively paralyzed any further large-scale experiments in cooperative systems since the Communist downfall. People fear the power of structures, so fragmentation feels safer, even at the cost of their own powerlessness. (Ironically, this over-fastidious fear of benevolent visions turning self-serving and tyrannical has given free rein to the unabashedly power-hungry and self-serving to come into absolute power!)

In healthy social evolution, however, there is always a convergence of creative emergence and new structures, of spontaneity and planning. There is nothing wrong with either of those; in fact, the trick to healthy systems is to find the balance, the sweet spot between rigidity and too much randomness, chaos. To the extent that this balance is there, diverse forces can come together into new configurations of coherence, movements that materialize and take form. Structures for emergence, and the emergence of new structures, go together.

All of this is to say that we should not fear power, or structures, or coming together around large-scale visions; we need to step up to the plate, and learn to navigate them in new, evolving, self-aware, creative, and flexible ways. We need not repeat the mistakes of the past, if we learn its lessons well. And the present is always offering up new, unprecedented possibilities, new turns of evolution. It's up to us to take them.

About the Author



Kavita Byrd works to bring together holistic consciousness, healing, and whole-systems change, with an emphasis on evolutionary spirituality and sacred activism. This has included research on ecology, climate change and new economics, integrating universal spiritual wisdom and radical social action for evolutionary global transformation. She is the author of the poetry collection *Love Songs of the Undivided* as well as the book *Quantum Co-Creative Revolution: We Are All in This Together*. She holds a BA in English Literature and Creative Writing from Princeton University.



John Foran

As an ecosocialist, a long-standing (and long-suffering) member of the Green Party of California, and an ardent supporter of 350.org, I have always argued that the answer to Paul Raskin's one big question—Just how do we get there?—called for the formation of the biggest, baddest, most inventive global social movement the world has ever seen, and this is probably not far from what Paul has in mind with the Global Citizens Movement.

But as a scholar of twentieth-century revolutions and twenty-first century movements for radical social change, I have started to come around to the idea that the urgency of the crisis in which we find ourselves, and the lack of adequate action on all sides (myself very much included) means that we need to consider the necessity of imagining something akin to a new *kind* of party, as well.

We are called, but to what we do not know exactly. In the face of the Anthropocene and the climate crisis, militarism, inequality, and a widespread lack of political voice, it is hard to know what to do. Very hard.

Yet it is precisely this question, this existential challenge, on which we must now focus our imaginations and love, in search of the greatest transformation we are capable of conjuring up—a Great Transition of all our systems—to something whole and nourishing for the planet and for the generations of Earthly creatures to come.

The good news is that millions—perhaps billions—of us know the score, and are ready to rise or already rising to the call. Transition initiatives, intentional communities, networks of educators, activists, and ordinary people, social movements large and small, streets of neighbors, and here-and-there political groupings have all emerged in recent years, determined both to block the machinery of death and to create the means of life.

It is to these beginnings of hope that we should now turn our attention, for to continue with business as usual is to slowly sink into chaos. The time is now and the agents are us, and those around us, in every corner of the Earth. To turn away is to go extinct. We must rise.

What We Might Try: A Proposal that Our Movements Confront the Issue of Political Power, Finding New Ways to Take and Use It

What could be the solution to all of this? What lies in fact between or beyond direct action, prefigurative communities, and meaningful elections? One idea that occurs to me is to combine electing some as yet unknown kind of “progressive” government and forging social movements to push it from below and alongside to make good on its promises, and for the new kind of parties that would lead such governments to make links with other movements, nations, and organizations everywhere. In other words, rather than the dichotomous choice between seeking to change the world through elections versus building a new society from the bottom up, the future of radical social change may well lie at the many possible *intersections* of deeply democratic social movements and equally diverse and committed new types of parties and political coalitions.

The political parties of the future don't yet exist, but we can catch glimpses of them and hopefully learn from such experimental forerunners as the political movement that grew up in Iceland after the great crash of 2008, and the electoral foibles and fortunes of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain (one could reference the Labour Party in Britain under Jeremy Corbyn as trending in the direction we wish, and also, though I know less about it, the much-heralded political experiment under way in Rojava, in northern Syria). Meanwhile, in Latin America, Pink Tide governments have also been working near this intersection. Other struggles that point toward this include the long movement for radical reforms in Kerala, India; the experiences of the world's Green parties; and the global climate justice movement. Each of these, and perhaps most of all, Podemos, suggests or hints at a new kind of political entity or party, without yet being that party.

What Comes Next?

Instead of these halting if promising precursors, though, what we need is some excitingly new and original kind of party or network or coalition that in each country or case comes out of the social movements that would bring it to power and can then be held strictly accountable by them as it turns

the ship of fools we're on around. Such a "party" (and the name is apt for the convivial connotations it holds) will be the patient, challenging, loving product of the actions of many people, and it will embrace the many, richly diverse threads of the new political cultures of opposition and creation.

Of course, this sounds simplistic and unrealistic, too good to be of practical value. But what have we got to lose? We aren't winning at present. We need to try something different, something we haven't really tried before, but which has predecessors in Chile in the 1970s and the Latin American Pink Tide in this century, even though all such electoral efforts to date have been contained by the great countervailing economic and political power of the global one percent, not to mention their own limitations and mistakes.

What if we could harness the people power, radical imagination, and boundless energy of all of these new actors of the future, starting by facilitating discussions among the new *social movements*, together brainstorming how to fashion some *new kind of party* to take power where that is possible, and in the process beginning to support and enable all the emerging *transition initiatives* to co-create radical social transformation from the local to the national level?

So, let's think about these pieces. The *social movements* have been introduced above. Not just the Arab Spring and Occupy, but their brilliant, short-lived predecessor, the global justice movement, and their more recent offspring in Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock, and many, many other rising voices, the vast majority of them not yet well known.

Meanwhile, *Transition initiatives*, whether by that name or (more often) some other, have sprouted and are being tended in multiple locations today, from [Totnes](#) in the UK to the [ZAD](#) in the woods and fields of France. The [US Transition Towns Gathering](#) in the summer of 2017 brought together people engaged in this work from all parts of the country. The French film *Demain* and the accompanying book in English *Tomorrow* capture the vibrancy and possibility of these movements, across a global space that runs from urban gardens in Detroit; to a zero-waste processing plant in San Francisco; local currency in Bristol, England; a paper factory in France run on the principles of the circular economy; organic farming with solar panels on La Réunion in the Indian Ocean; and a refreshing experiment with village democracy in Kuthambakkam, India.

A valuable recent approach to the problem of making change in the midst of diversity and chaos is that heralded in the title of Adrienne Maree Brown's 2017 book *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. This approach counsels activists to work from the bottom up in an inclusive way to generate a collective analysis that enables all present to focus on articulating their desires and most sought-after outcomes. After starting with an assessment of the current state of relevant issues, an emergent strategy moves on to a visioning exercise to identify our ideal state, follows this with a "change analysis" stage, which outlines what needs to change in order to achieve those visions, and ends with an "action" exercise to identify the projects that group members are most passionate about, with the potential to be put into motion.

If this sounds more evocative than prescriptive, that's because it's about attending to process, cultivating relationships, maximizing our diversity, and staying open to learning and deciding in uncertain, unfolding situations, which are skills much more useful to social movements than any step-by-step playbook or list of activities to check off.

Linking Arms, Going Global

What if a future election featured candidates emerging from among the young activists of the new social movements and out of the older ones in the transition initiatives, allied with those members of the Green and other progressive parties that were willing to share the stage, disaffected Sandernistas, and committed and passionate individuals everywhere, from all across the country?

What if those of us in the United States pulled off something spectacular like this? That would surely alter the global balance of power for the better. And this would only be strengthened if others carried out some version of it that made sense in their own contexts. Were such a government to come to power in the United States—against all odds, admittedly—it could work with others in the global North to honor their collective obligations to (1) degrow their own wasteful and harmful economies and slash their carbon footprints (2) cancel the debt of the global South, (3) transfer technology and other assistance to supply clean, abundant energy to all global citizens, (4) pay or make reparations for colonial and imperialist exploitation, (5) de-militarize down to the bone, and (6) guarantee fair and scientifically sustainable shares of the atmosphere and all resources to all. I would add free lifelong education everywhere to the above, along with some kind of guaranteed income or provision of basic needs such

as food and shelter. Undoubtedly, many conversations lie ahead in which such lists are compared and synthesized into the powerful manifesto that one day we will craft.

Globally, the climate justice movement might now be the name for the network of these movements all in the service of radical climate justice, in the broadest, most intersectional understanding of the term. One of its sustaining memes was literally carried on a banner by young climate justice activists through the frosty streets of Copenhagen on the occasion of the ill-fated COP 15 negotiations in December 2009, demanding “System Change Not Climate Change.” Let us all exercise our right to imagine new names for our movements, “parties,” and their key demands.

Concluding Thoughts

And if it isn’t clear now, or yet, we are striving to eventually build a future without this system, without capitalism, without endless growth, without obscene inequality, without the violence of militarism, and with democratic participation from bottom to top and back to the bottom again.

We are going to have to leverage the strength and power and beauty of our many movements and ideas into a new kind of entity—a completely new kind of party—that can take political power away from those who hold it, in place after place. In time, these experiments with the unknown would be able to support each other and link themselves together to find and create the pathways to the future we want. The new entities that come out of our movements must be made to live up to their promise and to enact our dreams by us, their only possible guarantors.

Such new parties, if they emerge, and the broader, diverse social movements that *must* drive and hold them accountable, would do well to link arms firmly with existing transition initiatives and the many more projects of creation that will need to be built everywhere. And they must synergistically support each other’s efforts to fashion the collective power we need for global governance. *Then* we would see a people’s Conference of the Parties (COP) articulate a “FAB” (fair, ambitious, and binding) universal climate treaty. *Then* we would be able to tax and legislate the fossil fuel corporations out of business. *Then* we would be able to take on the legacy of inequality and genocide that the United States has been built on. Then...

I offer these observations in the hope of generating further participation and passionate commitment among the many ordinary people who must rise to our common occasion. Else, after extreme and unimaginable suffering, only nothingness awaits us, which however likely, is simply not acceptable.

As the Zapatistas, those un-professionals of hope, often say, “We want a world where many worlds fit.” That world, somehow containing all our many worlds, will be created and constructed by those who are willing to seek it, to do the hard work (which, let’s not forget, also brings so much joy and purpose), and to embrace hope, imagination, and heart, in equally abundant measure.

The path will be long, hard, dangerous, and difficult, friends, so let’s get going!

About the Author



John Foran is a professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research focuses on movements for radical social change, such as the Zapatistas, Occupy, and the global climate justice movement. His books include *Taking Power: On the Origins of Revolutions in the Third World*, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution*, and *Taking Power or (Re)Making Power: Movements for Radical Social Change and Global Justice*. He holds a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley.



Herman Greene

The US Senate has just approved a new tax bill that confirms what we already knew: we live in a new gilded age. Neoliberalism, now dangerously associated with oligarchy, autocracy, and fascism, is in a phase of hyper-acceleration.

So it is appropriate that Paul Raskin has asked us how we might nurture “a systemic change agent matched to the task of planetary transformation.” The needed agent “would assert power culturally, by shaping ideas and behavior; tactically, through actions that disrupt the status quo; and strategically, by building institutions for sustained political influence.” It would be a “systemic movement” with a shared identity guided by a shared project of transformation, core principles, and a politics of trust. It would be composed of global citizens attuned to the needed realization of the planetary phase of civilization.

Part 1: The Macro Level

The biggest problem, as I see it, in bringing into being this change agent is a conceptual deficiency in the progressive movement. I reread parts of Raskin’s *Journey to Earthland* when preparing to write this essay. In his vision for the future, he describes Earthland’s regions as Agoria, Ecodemia, and Arcadia. Ecodemia, “a neologism for economic democracy...has a collectivist ethos and a socialized political economy.” It gives “primacy [to] social ownership [and] echoes classical socialism.” Yet, “Ecodemia’s commitment to democracy, rights, and the environment bears little resemblance to the autocratic socialist experiments of the 20th century.”¹

Ecodemia replaces the neoliberal organizing principles of today’s advanced industrial societies. Yet no powerful intellectual argument has been made for Ecodemia. Marxism is of some help, but it arose as a response to challenges of a different time. Then the issue was justice for labor; now it is that, but also the fate of the Earth community.

The present liberal-progressive vision speaks of equity on the assumption that there is an abundance of resources to bring everyone up to a high level, but to what level? Bruno Latour, in his *Facing Gaia*, criticizes liberals for being backward-looking, still reveling in their freedom from the bondage of the past.² He says their vision of the future, one free from all restraints, natural and social, lacks realistic content. Environmentalists recognize the need for restraints, Latour observes, but lament their inability to communicate scientific facts that require restraints, not realizing what really limits their appeal is that they are calling for changes in everyone's way of life (even though they have understated the magnitude of the changes required).

Clive Hamilton, in *Defiant Earth*, writes that liberals believe care for Earth arises from moral freedom, but now, in view of the Anthropocene, it must be understood as arising from moral obligation: "The new anthropocentric self does not float free like the modern subject, but is always woven into nature, *a knot in the fabric of nature*."³ The cosmology of the Anthropocene must be based on the concept of agency that extends beyond humans to the freedom that is woven into nature itself. Nature is a "dynamic, self-organizing system, characterized by emergent properties." Emergent properties "cannot be found in any individual element [of the Earth system] and evade all cause-and-effect explanations. ...The future always evades full predictability and inevitably holds surprises." Humans in a unique way manifest the spontaneous creativity of nature. Their "creative powers embody the possibility that they be used to enhance the life-enriching potential of the Earth as well as to improve the human condition."

It is in this context and cosmology that the organizing principles of Ecodemia must be conceived.

While I have long resisted naming "capitalism" as the problem (and haven't we all, to an extent, agreed that the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 was the "end of history"?), I have very recently concluded that it is. Isabelle Stengers, in her work *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, writes differently about barbarism than Paul in *Journey*.⁴ For Stengers, the primary threat of barbarism comes from the logic of the capitalistic system. This is not because there are not good capitalists or that capitalism is not innovative, but because the logic of the system will always drive some capitalists to profit from anything, even the destruction of Earth's life systems. Capitalism, she writes, "demands that we accept the ineluctable character of the sacrifices imposed by global economic competition." Progress requires that the state yield to "cutting-edge" science and technology and the necessary risks of the entrepreneur, and allow only the market to judge the consequences. Stengers argues that the greatest

barbarism would occur if capitalism were to conduct a “World War II mobilization to “save the Earth.” Then, believing that humans are the masters of their own fate, capitalists would call on a credulous public to unleash the full technological power of industry on Earth—an Earth now awakened, indifferent to their designs, and more than equal to their assault.

To avoid this, we need an understanding of democratic socialism for Ecodemia. The liberal post-World War II world order with all of its flaws, yet with its benefits of decades of peace, prosperity, and human development, is ending. There are those who propose a new order. As David Ignatius wrote in the *Washington Post*, “China Has a Plan to Rule the World”—and it is not Ecodemia.⁵ Jubilant in its denial, the United States, the “indispensable” nation, is withdrawing from or forfeiting its leadership. The international order based on sovereign states has always had an anarchic aspect, but a new anarchy is at hand.

In 1947, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, and others brought the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) into being. Classical *laissez-faire* capitalism had failed. State planning was on the rise through communism, state efforts to reconstruct Europe, and the modern welfare state. The founders sought to uphold the principles of free markets, limited government, personal liberty, and rule of law. They opposed welfare state capitalism and socialist planning, yet they were aware that classical liberalism had failed. They felt they had to construct a new liberalism, a “neo-liberalism.”

Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe in *The Road from Mont Pèlerin* describe the MPS as a “thought collective.”⁶ It was a members-only debating society whose handpicked members came to number over 1,200 people. While they shared common perspectives, MPS was not doctrinaire. Members operated on a transdisciplinary basis to “debate the outlines of a future movement diverging from classical liberalism, without having to suffer the indignities of ridicule for their often blue-sky proposals.” The MPS itself was little publicized. The members spread their ideas through various think tanks, advocacy groups, and foundations, as well as in governmental and academic positions. They sought to influence an intellectual elite of journalists, teachers, church leaders, governmental officials, and others. While most commonly associated with their economic views, they applied themselves to political theory, philosophy, law, history, sociology, and other disciplines.

In little over thirty years, with the advent of Reaganism and Thatcherism, the founders of MPS succeeded, though it is arguable whether later developments, such as the Washington Consensus,

the Koch brothers' Americans for Property, or the new US Senate tax bill, reflect the intended new liberalism, or whether they represent a move backward toward classical *laissez-faire* capitalism.

Be that as it may, our concern in GTI is not neoliberalism alone. Rather, we, sharing the same kinds of deep concerns that the founders of MPS had, have come together out of concern for the failure of neoliberalism, classical *laissez-faire* capitalism, and, also, classical socialism. A neo-democratic socialism is needed, but not even that... a neo-eco-democratic socialism is needed and this, like MPS's neoliberalism, involves many disciplines.

So on the macro-level, to bring into being the needed systemic change agent, I believe there is a need for a thought collective for Earthland (also known as "ecological civilization") to develop a neo-eco-democratic socialism. This thought collective would operate in a way that would be analogous to the way the MPS worked to develop neoliberalism. It would be embedded in or significantly related to GTI. This neo-eco-democratic socialism would need to be grounded in the Anthropocene and this would have major implications for each of "neo," "eco," "democratic," and "socialism"—"ecodemic socialism" for short. Ecodemic socialism would not be so much rights-based as *responsibilities-and-obligations*-based, and not so much *individual*-based as *communal*-based.

It may be that in thirty years' time (hopefully sooner), this thought collective could achieve similar results as MPS. I don't see how the systemic agent needed can arise without it.

Part 2: The Micro Level

In the responses to Raskin's essay, a few have taken on how to organize a global movement, but more have written about the inability to do top-down organizing given the multitude and complexity of the issues to be addressed and the diversity of people and societies involved. One respondent issued a warning about vanguard movements, and another about the limits of cosmopolitanism as contrasted with communitarianism.

I'm interested in the latter warning as I have just finished Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in their Own Land* about Tea Party supporters in Louisiana.⁷ Hochschild's book brought me into contact with people who have lived in only one place and have lifetime jobs in Dairy Queens, stocking grocery store shelves, and driving delivery trucks. They would be "communitarians" not "cosmopolitans" if communitarian

were used to mean parochial and protectionist, though there are more positive meanings of communitarian.

Does the future belong to the cosmopolitans and not communitarians as might be suggested in *Journey*? We have entered the planetary phase of civilization, but is it a “global” civilization calling for “global” citizens?

Bruno Latour in *Facing Gaia* deconstructs the “globe.”⁸ On the one hand, it is a burden that humans, like Atlas, must bear and somehow have the ability to do so. On the other, it is like a table globe, something we can hold in our hands and control. In the latter sense, the globe implies total and complete knowledge is possible, when in truth, Latour asserts, no one can “think globally.” “The figure of the Globe authorizes a premature leap to a higher level by *confusing the figures of connection with that of totality*.” The globe gives us a “view from nowhere.” We can see this, can’t we, when we observe the activities of global corporations? But Latour says this view from nowhere also applies to many other modes of modern thought that contemplate the universal, including universal solutions.

Regarding the Anthropocene, Latour says, the Anthropocene is not a reconciliation of humans and nature; rather, it is that everywhere in what we used to call nature, we find the anthropos. This is understood, but then a leap is made that there is some anthropos that acts collectively, is a moral agent, and is morally culpable. Here the anthropos becomes the human species, when in truth there is no unitary anthropos capable of acting or of bearing this guilt.

The globe would be better understood as a vast 25,000 mile expanse of people, plants, animals, and geological, atmospheric, and hydrological realities of great diversity interacting with each other. Latour says the globe has to be composed by becoming sensitive to these interactions at billions of locations, just as we have come to understand the weather (composed the weather) by monitoring at countless locations. The self-regulation of “Gaia” developed by James Lovelock, Latour observes, has been misunderstood as some transcendent organizing mechanism, when in truth it is multiple actors connected through loops engaged in reciprocal co-evolution.

What is needed now, Latour says, is “the relocalization of the Globe, [a] move from the Globe to the quasi-feedback loops that tirelessly design it in a way that is broader and denser each time.” It is the disruption of this set of feedback loops that is bringing about, in Lovelock’s words, the “revenge of Gaia.”

In thinking about the needed systemic change agent, it may help if we step back from the idea of a movement of “global” citizens, to an idea of a movement of sensitive and responsive people working at multiple levels in many places of the world responding to Gaia’s quasi-feedback loops. This movement is not unitary, cannot be organized, and is already in being. Its global impact is and will be an emergent phenomenon.

The role of the members of GTI in relation to this vast movement is to be a leaven. We are all already engaged in parts of it. We take what we learn from these dialogues into our own actions. As for GTI as an organization, it could expand its education and outreach role. Educational programs and films could be developed around *Journey*. And as I discussed in Part 1, a thought collective on neo-eco-democratic socialism could provide needed conceptual understanding for the movement.

I will close by returning to the idea of the politics of trust. We must trust that this vast movement will be the needed systemic change agent, and we must do our best to make it so.

Endnotes

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5. David Ignatius, “China Has a Plan to Rule the World,” *Washington Post*, November 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/china-has-a-plan-to-rule-the-world/2017/11/28/214299aa-d472-11e7-a986-d0a9770d9a3e_story.html.
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8. Latour, *Facing Gaia*.

About the Author



Herman Greene is founder and president of the Center for Ecozoic Studies, a hub for dialogue and thought on an ecological-cultural age. He is co-editor of the forthcoming textbook *Earth Law: Emerging Ecocentric Law—A Guide for Practitioners*. He serves on the Boards of the Earth Law Center, Institute for Ecological Civilization, and International Process Network, and on the Advisory Boards of the Center for Process Studies and the Institute for the Post-Modern Development of China. Earlier in his career, he was a corporate, tax, and securities lawyer. He holds graduate degrees in law (University of North Carolina), theology (University of Chicago and United Theological Seminary), and political science (Stanford University).



Candido Grzybowski

I find this debate encouraging as it serves as an opportunity to reflect on my own personal activism and my work at Ibase—in the major UN conferences in the 1990s, in the twentieth century, and in the World Social Forum, mainly from 2001 to 2012.

Collective action depends on the mobilizing imaginary (visions, values, and proposals) combined with historical possibilities. The will and the ability to take action is something we ourselves construct, and therefore it only depends on us. However, the historical possibilities depend on all collective subjects and on the specific moments of the society where we belong to, being a synthesis of multiple contradictions.

GTI scenarios explore the possible combinations of given historical circumstances and the strategic choices and guidance of the collective subjects in political and cultural world struggle. Some combinations would lead to a world largely the same; some to a descent into barbarism, in which all life on earth is at risk; and still others to a virtuous transition to a better world. Collective action is a variable with potentially transformative impacts. The vast work of collective action requires the action of specific citizens in the specific territories where they live. How do we shape collective subjects as institutional and constitutional historical forces of power, economy, and society? To put it in simple terms, it can be said that historical conditions do not produce collective subjects. These subjects emerge in and through action, through struggle, and in contention with the options that the scenario presents, according to what they feel, dream, and see.

This introduction is important since we, one way or another, live scattered all over the planet, in very specific territories, contained within the borders of nation-states with internal social and territory segregation, between the poor and the rich, black and white people, big farms and indigenous communities, religious and nonreligious people, and so on. Neoliberal capitalist globalization, led by huge economic and financial corporations, is beyond the control of the state

and the weak existing multilateral organizations, imposing the free market as the model to govern planet and society. Globalization's effects have been a paradox. Globalization has fed the emergence of the sense of belonging to the same world, the same humankind. Yet, at the same time, capitalist globalization is fueling a concentration of wealth and huge social inequalities and destroying the environment without limits. Worse still, accompanying economic globalization has been a "colonization of hearts and minds" in which consumerism, individualism, and profits become paramount.

I should mention that I am writing this piece in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. President Temer's government is brutally attacking hard-won rights, dismantling social and environmental policies, and implementing undemocratic constitutional reforms that prioritize the private sector and market forces. All Rio de Janeiro's state government political leadership of the last twenty years have been involved in a major corruption scheme in collusion with gangs of the private business sector. Due to poor management and a dependence on oil and gas royalties, the state went bankrupt, with civil servants facing unpaid wages and hospitals and schools facing the risk of closure. Poverty is clearly seen in the streets. And even worse, in a city with high social and ethnic segregation, violence has spread all over the urban periphery, in a real undeclared civil war of the police against drug dealers gangs. Under such circumstances, is it possible to think of creating a new world? Maybe our most urgent problem to solve now is how to dig resistance trenches to prevent this scenario from leading to the establishment of plain and simple barbarism.

To participate in shaping collective subjects to create another kind of world, we must face the fragmentation and weakness of our resistance groups, setting out the fundamental question: Is the scope of our dream just limited to restore what Rio de Janeiro and Brazil used to be in the last two decades? Or maybe adversity should lead us to think about the strategic mistakes we made and the lack of audacity of our dreams to take Brazil into the path of a real transition to another kind of world? After all, what kind of Brazil does the world need?

I am presenting these issues since I believe they can contribute to collective reflection (a precursor to collective action) and, mainly, because they are strategic for us. I think that the problem we have to address is not at an organizational one. Social movements are already doing very well at what they are able to do: shaping themselves as collective subjects, with their own identity, values, and common

visions; organizing themselves; showing their ability and great creativity in their struggles for their fundamental agendas.

From local to global, we lack a robust cultural and ideological counterhegemony as Antonio Gramsci describes it: a process of contestation—in the heart of civil societies, in the public spaces—about visions and concepts, ways of acting and living as a human collective in a finite world. This is about countering xenophobia and racism, intolerance and hatred, and valuing rights of freedom and equality over privileges, individualism, colonialism and racism, nationalism, and market freedom. It is also about confronting unlimited mercantilization and defending the importance of public goods and the commons. We need cities for citizens, rather than for cars. What does wealth—meeting everyone needs and welfare—really mean? We need to confront “destructive production,” such as oil and gas, plastic, arms industry, advertising. We need to do more than what we are warned to do about climate change, since its cause is the colonization of our common atmosphere, resulting from the mass privatizations of capitalism.

It is fundamental to put our hearts and minds to debate in public spaces, in the media, in social networks, in cultural and religious spaces, in the gym, in the club, in the pub, and in civil society forums. We need to join social movements, listen and learn from them, and be inspired by them. This is a task of political and cultural construction, of creating movements of ideals that stick to reality. We are being defeated by a way of thinking that seems to have no alternative.

It is possible to create another kind of world, but we need to dream and believe, despite the difficult circumstances we may face. We need something like an immense cultural wave able to convey a sense of freedom, emancipation and humanity, a sense of equality among the differences, of well-being restrained in the many emergences and rebellions, the big and the small ones, the unequal, the inconsistent, yet legitimate, popping up all over the world. Such a mobilizing imaginary can only be constructed in a collaborative way, respecting diversity and the multiple struggles we are involved in. Rather than artificially joining together, we have to explore new philosophies of life as webs that connect us in the search for a greater common good, and fearlessly confront the backlash that this produces among the powerful collective subjects, who consider themselves the owners of everything, including history.

About the Author



Candido Grzybowski is a philosopher and sociologist. He serves as an Advisor to the Executive Staff of the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE), and was previously IBASE's Director-General (2000–2014) and a member of its collegiate body (2014–2017). He was an active member of the organizing committee of the World Social Forum and its International Council. Earlier, Grzybowski was Professor of Sociology of Development at the Fundação Getulio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro (1979–1991). He holds a PhD from the University of Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne and did post-doctoral research at University College London.



Michael Karlberg

At the end of his insightful analysis, Paul Raskin poses two primary questions: “How can we envision a systemic global movement?” and “What initiatives can hasten its coalescence?” In my humble opinion, if a global citizens movement is to emerge, it will have to emerge in an organic manner. That is, such a movement will have to unfold in exceedingly complex and dynamic ways, punctuated by partially unpredictable transformational moments, ways more akin to the growth and development of an organic body, or the evolution of a species, than the construction of a (social) technology. This is, in the broadest brush strokes, how I envision a systemic global movement of the kind Raskin invites us to consider. Yet this does not imply acceptance of a passive response to the need for a global citizenship movement, nor does it imply a lack of agency on our part. Rather, it implies the need to assess the relative capacities and opportunities of any given individual, organization, or network, and think deeply about how any given agent can best contribute to the advancement of this complex dynamic process. And it seems to me that this is how we need to think about what initiatives can hasten the coalescence (or advancement, perhaps) of such a movement.

In this regard, I would hope that most readers have already given deep thought to the relative capacities and opportunities that enable and constrain their individual and collective efforts to foster a great transition, and a global citizens movement in support of it. The question that seems most immediately relevant to this discussion is: What more, if anything, can the GTI—this network we are all participating in—contribute toward these ends? When I think in these terms, I recognize that the GTI, under the leadership of the Tellus Institute, has proven quite effective at creating spaces for informed, thoughtful, probing discourse, among diverse leaders of thought from many academic and activists fields, on the exigencies of the age we live in and some of the means for addressing them. This is a proven capacity that is in keeping with the nature of Tellus and the nature of this online GT Network. Of course, I think GTI recognizes that it does not have the capacity

to directly organize or foster systematic and transformational kinds of social action, but only help spawn new initiatives. Meanwhile, many other entities can foster grounded social action, but are unable to foster thoughtful discourse. Both are needed. Indeed, each has to inform the other, if knowledge and practice are to advance in a dialectical manner.

In this context, I return to the second question posed: What initiatives can hasten the coalescence or advancement of a global citizens movement? There are undoubtedly many such initiatives, but it makes sense to focus on initiatives GTI can actually undertake. Toward this end, I suggest GTI consider how it can deepen and expand its proven capacity to contribute to public discourse, as a means of contributing to the evolution of thought, or the evolution of consciousness, beyond the current network of GTI participants. Other respondents have emphasized the semiotic and epistemic dimensions of a great transition, when they have referred to the need for more compelling narratives, memes, etc. Though this is only one dimension of the great transition, and only one dimension of what it will take to advance a global citizenship movement, it is an important dimension and it is the dimension to which GTI is most suited to contribute since the medium of semiotic and epistemic evolution is, in large part, discourse. So on that note, I hope there's a way for GTI to significantly expand and deepen its capacity to foster informed, thoughtful, probing discourse on the exigencies of the age we live in and some of the means for addressing them—among expanding circles of diverse participants from around the world. This would constitute a significant contribution to the complex, dynamic, organic process of a great transition to a planetary civilization, and perhaps to the emergence of a global citizens movement within this wider process.

About the Author



Michael Karlberg is Professor of Communication Studies at Western Washington University. His interdisciplinary scholarship examines prevailing conceptions of human nature, power, social organization, and social change—and their implications for the pursuit of peace and justice. He authored the books *Beyond the Culture of Contest* and *Constructing Social Reality: An Inquiry into the Normative Foundations of Social Change* along with numerous articles and book chapters on related themes. His most recent community-engaged research focuses on the role of radical constructive agency in the creation of more peaceful and just social forms.



Debbie Kasper

The premise that “a systemic social force is needed to drive a systemic planetary shift” and the questions of “what shape might such a force take and how can we best nurture it?” are indeed what drive my work’s teaching, writing, planning, and engaging with my community.

There is so much to say (to second, to reiterate, to clarify, to synthesize), and yet, time constraints demand brevity. So with the understanding that there are *many* and *diverse* needs for action at multiple levels and scales, I offer ONE such possible (and possibly pie-in-the-sky) place to start—or more accurately, to continue, albeit with renewed enthusiasm, a more coherent vision, and greater coordination.

I am ever grateful for others’ specialized knowledge that has shaped my thinking, but my mind tends toward synthesis and big picture views. This way of thinking consistently leads me to conclude that one necessary entry point is changing *how people think*. Among many other implications, one I am presently persuaded by is the need for a new cultural narrative. George Monbiot’s latest work deals with this theme; in it, he points out the two prevailing stories (social democracy vs. neoliberalism) and suggests humanity’s cooperative nature and astonishing capacity for altruism as the basis of a different option. He calls it the “Politics of Belonging” (to me that seems right, in that we need to clarify and affirm our belonging to the planet and web of life, to the network of humanity, to particular communities, etc.). I would argue that, in addition to whatever else has to happen or does happen at the scale of global politics, developing understanding and skills around how to build and live in resilient communities is a non-negotiable necessity. Given climate change, our tumultuous politics, and the widespread alienation-anxiety-depression of individuals in our society, it will be essential regardless of what international political and economic maneuvers we might happen to pull off, and it can directly and indirectly serve GTI goals at multiple levels.

To meet Paul Raskin's original demand for ideas of possible initiatives to catalyze such a movement, I've put together a rough sketch of a plan to engage others, seed new ways of thinking about our situation, and grow involvement in an ongoing fashion through a set of diverse opportunities at multiple levels.

In short, it involves:

- A story
- An awakening
- Inspiring motives
- Paths of action
- A strong and diverse presence
- Clever packaging in a variety of ways

Here is a slightly elaborated vision:

1. Develop an engaging **alternative narrative** with which people can make sense of things differently.

Following Monbiot's criteria, it must be simple and intelligible, have broad appeal, cross traditional political lines, resonate with deep human needs and desires, explain the mess we are in and the means by which we might escape it, and be firmly grounded in reality.

2. That narrative must be **presented in a variety of forms**—including a short and sweet condensed version—and **be accompanied by** a series of premises on which to build an increasingly advanced and accurate understanding of the how the planet works, humans' place in it, basic human nature, the historical moves that got us here, what to expect if we continue down this path, options for choosing differently, what direction we should be collectively moving in, and actionable ways people working in different roles and at different scales can do that.

3. The above should provide a clear **vision** and **inspiring motives** for doing this rather than that, and should **motivate** people to act, in some way.

4. Over time, **create multiple means of engagement, education, and involvement**. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. Create a course (or longer curriculum) aimed at students that can be embedded in colleges and universities.

- b. Create comparable versions of this curriculum in the form of professional development opportunities tailored to business leaders, politicians, community and religious leaders, journalists, etc.
- c. Once the course/s are developed and piloted, host regular teach-the-teacher workshops, so that professors and others delivering them can learn how to teach them by experiencing the course/s and optimal teaching methods being modeled.
- d. Develop a full on-site in-person version, an online version, and offer smaller pieces a la carte for those interested.
- e. Develop accompanying bite-sized materials that can go viral and serve as gateways through which people new to all this can learn more.
- f. Eventually develop spinoff material geared toward the specific interests and needs that become apparent and emerge (in communities, in businesses, in religious orgs, etc.).
- g. Use existing networks and likeminded organizations to share and help spread the word (e.g., sustainability in higher ed orgs, even college accrediting bodies—perhaps, Resilience.org, GTI, Post Carbon Institute, SCORAI, Culture2Inc, Center for Humans and Nature, Templeton Foundation, etc.).

To accomplish this, we would need (1) a sense of what can be done in what timeframe, and a timeline of action to keep us focused and hold us accountable, (2) a sense of how many would initially be able and willing to participate (both in terms of creators *and* number of opportunities among colleges/universities and their professors and programs, just for a start), and (3) a way to fund somebody or a group of somebodies to get started on the first steps.

About the Author



Debbie Kasper is a sociologist and Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at Hiram College. She specializes in sociological theory, environmental sociology, community resilience, and social change and offers a wide variety of courses related to these themes. Her latest book is *Beyond the Knowledge Crisis: A Synthesis Framework for Socio-Environmental Studies and Guide to Social Change*. She holds a PhD from Pennsylvania State University.



Roz Savage

Paul has raised a tremendously important question—in fact, THE question of our times, and one with which I have been obsessed, sometimes mildly, sometimes all-consumingly, since 2004. My awakening that year came about as a result of spending a month alone in a small cottage in Ireland, reading, amongst many other things, [Edgar Cayce's predictions](#) and the [prophecies of the Hopi tribe](#). If only I could be sure this formula would work for everybody, I'd be proposing that we could hasten the global movement by enforcing a similar reading program.

More seriously, at its core, the experience I had in that lonely Irish cottage was a crucial shift in the story I believed to be true about the world—and my view is that this is key to how we catalyze a systemic global movement.

Pre-Cayce and Hopi, I had seen the world as fundamentally unchanging and predictable. Post-Cayce and Hopi, it now seemed fundamentally unstable and volatile, and that the future would to a large extent be a reflection of the state of human consciousness. It was almost overwhelming to newly perceive the responsibility as being so squarely ours—and by extension, mine, at least in part. The net impact of this was that, by the time I came back from Ireland, I had transformed from passenger to participant. To create an effective GCM, the easier part may be converting more individuals from passenger to participant; the harder part, creating alignment in how that participation is expressed.

To my mind, what we need is a new narrative to underpin and unite a global movement, a story that appeals enough to enough people that it can become a rallying cry for a new way of being. MLK's "I have a dream" was such a story—a compelling vision of a possible future with the power to inspire and activate. We need an equivalent.

So, assuming that we need a new story, how best to create it? If the story is going to embody values of responsibility and collaboration, arguably these values should also underlie the process of creating it, i.e., a co-creative approach. But I remain to be convinced. Some point to the Arab Spring or the Occupy movement as essentially leaderless revolutions, but I would suggest that a successful revolution needs to lead to an evolution, a new order to replace the old. So I feel that we need a leader or leaders who can articulate their vision of that new order, or the revolutionary energy fizzles away without capitalizing on its moment of opportunity.

And then, how do we disseminate this new story? I agree with Howard Zinn, as quoted by Paul: “We forget how often we have been astonished by the sudden crumbling of institutions, by extraordinary changes in people’s thoughts, by unexpected eruptions of rebellion against tyrannies, by the quick collapse of systems of power that seemed invincible.” I agree that that change can be swift and radical rather than incremental—or, as I put it, a sudden outbreak of common sense across the world.

But how does this happen? Is it something like a one-hundredth-monkey phenomenon, a spontaneous shift in consciousness via metaphysical planes beyond our seeing? Or alternatively, it might be facilitated by technology, such as the Noomap. Could something like this have the ability to connect us to form a Global Citizens Movement, as neurons connect to form a brain?

But there still needs to be an incentive for people to change. Most people don’t like change, even when it is for the better. Our brains are wired to prefer the familiar to the new because—although we enjoy novelty, within limits—familiar is safe, while new might be dangerous. What will be an adequate incentive to overcome inertia and generate a Global Citizens Movement, when so many people would rather be comfortably numb?

Common Cause UK does some interesting workshops on values and frames, and warns of the dangers and difficulties of trying to use extrinsic incentives to generate intrinsic values. So if the motivation needs to come from within, what could be the spark? I envisage a time when gross financial inequality could galvanize a movement. Or maybe people will realize how we have all been duped by the advertising industry into doing jobs we don’t like to buy stuff we don’t need. Or workers will get tired of selling the irreplaceable commodity of their time to enrich the C-suite. Looking back through history, it seems that movements have most often been birthed by fury over injustice.

A fury-fueled movement may not be what we wish for. But anger does undeniably generate action—and transformation. We can see how the frustration over Trump’s election has united and galvanized women, environmentalists, and possibly many other groups.

It is possible that there could be a gentler way, and that would certainly be my preference. But maybe we do need the darkest hour before the dawn.

About the Author



Roz Savage is the only woman to row solo across the world’s “big three” oceans: Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian. She is a United Nations Climate Hero, a trained presenter for the Climate Reality Project, an Athlete Ambassador for 350.org, and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. She was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire for services to the environment. She is on the board of Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation, and a Blue Ambassador for the UK-based BLUE Project. She writes, speaks, and lectures on sustainability, courage, resilience, and change.



Roberto Savio

First of all, as we focus on the future, it is essential to look at the past. As Paul Raskin eloquently notes, we are united by a shared future, but we are united by a shared past as well. This shared past had two phases, both of which had major impacts on society.

The first is era of the Washington Consensus and the neoliberal creed, which became la *pensée unique* as of 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell. History was at its end, or so the acolytes of this newly dominant creed hoped. This, in turn, created an unprecedented counter-mobilization, with the World Social Forum as a prime example. Nearly 100,000 people paid the costs of travels and hotels to be together, to share the same identity of resistant to the *pensée unique*, and declare that another world was possible.

In the subsequent two decades, nearly everyone was trained and conditioned to make greed the most important individual value. It took that time to find out that macroeconomic indicators did not catch the social and structural damages that neoliberal globalization was creating. The 2006 conference of the Bretton Woods institutions, where the IMF, WB, and IDB, started to reclaim the role of the state, marked, as I see it, the end of the credibility of Washington Consensus (although it maintains its hold in the corridors of power).

The sense of global community in those two decades went exactly in our direction. Then the financial crisis hit, first in the US in 2007 and then in 2009 in Europe. And since then, fear has been the common mobilizer—mobilizing people in a different direction. After the Western interventions in Iraq, Syria, and Libya, in which Europe sent bombs and they sent back refugees, the fear about the future has resurrected nationalism, populism, and xenophobia, which were only fringes before.

So what does this mean for the prospects of a Great Transition, and what should we be doing?

First, we need to go beyond the academy and link up with new actors. After nearly thirty years, the idea of social movements has lost its shine. The WSF is in a deep existential crisis. Why? Because the keepers of the Talmud (those who did not want to change a comma of the original chart of principles) made every effort to separate WSF from any political engagement for fear of contamination. It thus became little more than a kind of spiritual exercise: you meet, you meditate, you make spiritual exercise, and you go back better and with deeper engagement, after having met many people like you.

Second, we need to do a better job of connecting existing social movements. Sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos coined the concept of “translation” in the context of the World Social Forum. How can you translate the feminist movement into the indigenous movement? They have different priorities: the feminist movement’s goal is to end patriarchy; the indigenous movement’s focus is securing the respect of their space, identity.

At the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, two kinds of movements emerged. On one hand, there were those who found their legitimacy in fighting the system, as they did in Seattle during the WTO protests. The others were those focused on themes in the UN space, like human rights, environment, development, etc., and they got their legitimacy from the UN, who recognized and legitimated their activism. The two sides took two years to coalesce, and tensions between the social movements and the NGOs never really ended.

A Global Citizens Movement can only form if a work of translation is done, and such different kinds of movements can coalesce. Individualism is very strong in the activist world, and it is difficult at first to elicit such cross-movement commonality.

How to go forward? I believe that it is important to make clear that we all have a common enemy, so that everybody will identify with a concrete task on which to engage. But this is not possible if we do not find a way to ask them to engage, and an academic approach is far from their language and their immediate concern. We must engage with people on their own terms, with the language they understand.

About the Author



Roberto Savio is the founder of the Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency, a nonprofit cooperative of journalists and experts specializing in global communications and development issues. Since 1973, he has been a consultant on information and communication issues for many developing countries, designing the National Information Systems Network (ASIN) for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the UNESCO-supported Latin American Features Service (ALASEI). He has served on the International Council of the World Social Forum since its inception in 2001, and is the Chairman of the Board of the Alliance for a New Humanity. He is the co-founder of Media Watch International, co-founder of the Internet service Othernews, and president of Indoamerica, an Argentine education NGO.



Bruce Schuman

Our Vast Mosaic

In the context of critical transition, Paul Raskin places before us one of the greatest philosophical and technical challenges in history, and invites us to propose a plausible pathway forward:

The challenge is at once plural and unified. The Great Transition of which we speak entails a systemic shift that manifests across a vast mosaic of themes, issues, and places. This sparkling heterogeneity urges an ecumenical change strategy that validates plural points of leverage under a canopy of unity. Taken together, the many forms of progressive action already underway from local to global scales could well be the harbinger of a systemic social agency.

How could those many forms of progressive action be coordinated?

Major Dimensions of an Adequate Response

This response to Raskin's inquiry suggests the development of a holistic and inclusive network system, defined across the full range of human experience, in a form that supports his "pluralistic but unified" approach and incorporates the vast and detailed data-processing capacity of the Internet.

There is nothing simple about any such network. Though it should be built from the best elements world civilization has brought together, it must be understood as unprecedented in many ways. Many new possibilities are emerging because new technologies and new insights are available to us. We are experiencing a "new paradigm," involving new possibilities in science, governance, and philosophy. We are exploring comprehensive integration across many sectors of human experience, with implications for every facet of life.

Raskin speaks of a "vast mosaic." We must develop a systematic compilation or interpretation of all pertinent elements of this mosaic—literally thousands or millions of individually identifiable

elements, brought together through well-organized collective brainstorming and detailed individual interviews. These include social sectors, technical factors, academic and scientific disciplines, political and social issues, and principles of governance, all gathered together “under a canopy of unity.” Bringing these elements together in an organized way is a huge task, comparable in scale and complexity to the emergence of Wikipedia or Amazon, but defined in a convergent mathematical system and designed in a format that can evolve and expand under creative influence.

To the degree that this mosaic today is fragmented, partial, scattered, or in substantial conflict with itself, we must develop means to survey our situation in a high-level way, and begin the careful process of negotiating and enabling balanced intercultural and interdisciplinary connections between fragments or contending elements. Concerned organizations must work together around their common areas of specialized expertise, regardless of small differences. Leading cultural institutions must be encouraged to adopt an ethic of constructive cooperation rather than confrontation and competition.

As a guiding map and container for all facets of this work, we should begin to propose and refine an integral model of knowledge that helps us see how all facets of our understanding are linked in some ways to all others. Just as human culture is fragmented today, so, too, is human knowledge. While recognizing and respecting traditional boundaries between scientific and academic disciplines, we must overcome divisive tensions that separate academic or political sectors by developing integrating models that support smooth negotiation and collaboration. There is work here for both scholars and engineers as well as facilitators and negotiators.

We should develop and adapt a universal guiding ethic of community and cooperation, based on the best insights of the world community, grounded in innumerable sources, and compiled and validated in a systematic way. As Raskin says, “engaging a rapidly changing world and embracing new waves of participants requires an adaptive strategy and spirit of co-creation. Not least, we need to cultivate a politics of trust that tolerates proximate differences in order to foster ultimate solidarity.”

For me, the task is to combine our guiding insights into a single framework, embracing and incorporating the full potential of our moment. It is the solidity and clarity of this framework that can create our capacity for activism, and without such a framework, we are feeling our way forward in an overwhelming sea of fragments—no doubt well-intended and hopeful on their own, or brilliant and

precious, but incomplete and shifting under our feet, leaving us unable to act together with certainty and without a trustworthy foundation for agreement.

Basic Attributes and Guiding Memes

It seems there are a few simple principles that for many of us guide this emerging vision. Our project must be

- Intercultural (we must include every culture),
- Interdisciplinary (we must include every academic or scientific discipline or cultural sector),
- Absolutely inclusive (we must include every person who wants to be included),
- Co-creative (we must listen to one another and work together in a spirit of mutual respect), and
- Fundamentally cohesive and integral (we must be guided by wholeness).

We must conceptualize a way to act together that embraces these ideals, that combines elements from everywhere throughout civilization, that empowers and authenticates collective thinking, that nurtures the best and most graceful in human beings.

The Ethic of Co-Creation

As conceived here, the most important and dominating element holding together the entire project is a common ethic and “co-creator’s agreement,” through which all participants agree to work together in a spirit of respectful co-creation and listening. Confirming this agreement is the core and foundational requirement for entering the “widening circle” of this project.

Participation involves significant skills and patience. The problems are huge and complex, multifaceted and controversial, and approaching and resolving them in many cases will involve methods and theories that do not exist today. Everyone will be challenged and entering unfamiliar territory. We must create a safe and viable space for participation by talented people who are giving their best, and be prepared to work within an evolving framework we cannot fully foresee. A shared ethic of trust and respect will protect and empower this project.

Many and One

It seems that the instincts of many people today are guided by an emerging holistic meme or conceptual archetype that contains everything they are sensing about the emerging new world, and many of us seem to know we can trust it. This notion is “oneness,” a fundamental concept in both philosophy and religion, as well as in science and mathematics. Within this framework, with endless fluency, the one becomes the many—the many becomes the one. These are fundamental principles governing the form of any concept, and our collective instinct for oneness, understood in many ways, undergirds many of the best ideas for guiding an inclusive and transformative movement for a world that works.

We seem to know that globalization IS universalization. The process of globalization and intercultural encounter drives the universalization of ideas. This idea seems to hover over everything, in ways we can trust. But this principle is so transcendent and abstract—at the same time exceedingly simple yet embracing such overwhelming complexity—that this universal guiding form or concept remains elusive. We are still feeling our way forward. This issue is a scientific revolution in progress.

Part and Whole

A case can be made that this process proceeds under the guidance of the most ancient and classical of philosophic insights, arising today in hundreds of alternative new interpretations that remain somehow the same. The primal wholeness of being has been differentiated. Unity has become multiplicity and plurality. Boundaries based on these distinctions have been drawn and institutionalized. Our task is to clarify and untangle this process.

History and civilization have created boundaries everywhere. But global intercultural encounter is transforming and transcending these boundaries. A hybrid new global culture is emerging as a result. Every region—every nation—every academic specialization, every “department”—is defined by boundaries as both whole and part, both one and many. Balance in all these facets becomes essential for collective cohesion across these boundaries, whether they are real or imagined. This balance in all things in the context of wholeness is the key to global justice. It is the key to global health and planetary

homeostasis. In the context of this ideal, no facet is excluded, all voices are heard, all influences recognized, all contingencies placed in relationship.

The leading cultural visions for ethics and authenticity from everywhere come together in this process of coalescence and encounter. The design spans levels of abstraction, stretching from the absolute inclusive breadth of humanistic holism to the highly specialized particulars of empirical science.

Dialogue and Co-Creative Negotiation

Informed dialogue in a context of careful listening and mutual respect is our common bond, our point of encounter. This is the point of intercultural fusion, where the creative power of human differences can meet in the fire of newness. It is in this crucible that our common agenda can be formed, our activist initiatives be defined. What shall we do? How shall we decide? These are the essential issues of our new inspired democracy—a new democracy that we might hope could extend in its same general form across every level of scale, extending from the intimately local (the family dining room table), to regional and national and global. Could we hold all of this together in wholeness, under a single guiding meme?

In the context of dialogue, our common ground and universal common ethic can be forged from every source of authentic wisdom within our civilization.

Primary Memes of the Integral Vision

In this context, we foresee the growth of a consciously selected and intentionally defined network process, interconnecting “forces for good” anywhere they might arise, guided and bonded by a common allegiance to the whole and to the success of evolution and civilization. Perhaps this network is not governance—or perhaps it is. The network builds from its natural leadership finding common resonance in the simple, and radiating influence from those connections, in a gradual process that maintains its balance and nuance at every moment, self-correcting as it grows.

Global governance and the “optimization of democracy” can be defined as a network design that seeks stability and balance at every point, in an interconnected grid governed by allegiance to the whole.

The network can embrace well-organized and disciplined systematic methods, capable of gathering and organizing huge amounts of data—brainstorming, cataloguing, indexing, cross-correlating, across all semantic or political boundaries.

The network must aim to overcome the “silo effect”—specialization, isolated localization producing fragmentation and blind misunderstanding, incommensurate systems and frameworks that cannot support cooperation.

The network is bonded by an integral guiding ethic of co-creation and dialogue, guiding and governing our collaboration at every point of difference.

As our understanding evolves, we are collectively guided by the master vision of part and whole, of many and one, of plurality and unity, extending across all levels of human experience.

The design embraces fractal levels of scale, organized like Google maps that telescope across huge global regions to focus on intimate local issues and concerns.

Don't argue positions and policy agendas until a fully inclusive framework is developed that spans all disciplines and all positions on any issue at any level of scale. It is this framework that can heal our confusion and our rage.

People are confused and dismayed or depressed and resigned today, because they don't see how this puzzle can come together. But under the context of these primary guiding principles, even at vast scale this all seems so natural, so simple, even classical.

Activism: The Widening Circle

What we should do:

- Convene a core group of activists with a passion for this kind of work.
- Develop an initial comprehensive framework and project design, defining an initial basis for inter-organizational cooperation at expert levels.
- Establish a core body of basic principles and practices governing our “co-creative relationship” or “co-creator’s agreement.”

- Develop formal methods for collaborative brainstorming and comprehensive data management, looking for formats that can be whittled down to broad simple generalities, but explained in detail as appropriate.
- Identify agencies anywhere that seem to be serving this broad cause in some specific way.
- Create an entry point for these agencies and any individuals who might want to participate around areas of specific expertise and motivation.
- Make it possible and easy for individual unaffiliated people anywhere to engage with this process, through allegiance to our simple common ethic of co-creation, enabling direct participation through elements they find appealing.
- Develop methods for outreach that contact special people and groups who might not be ready to become directly involved, but might participate on an occasional or brief basis through quick electronic questionnaires.

Global Cooperation

Can we design a “global network for cooperation” that includes all elements of human experience, guided by a collaborative spirit of high wisdom and grace?

There are agencies and talented people everywhere who are contributing critical elements to this process. We should be looking everywhere for these people, supporting and incorporating their work.

This is clearly a vast undertaking with a complex architecture and innumerable moving parts. We should see it as no less complicated than a modern automated factory or the supply chain system that today delivers products to customers overnight.

Elon Musk is building fabulous complex systems. So is Jeff Bezos. So are YouTube and Facebook and Google. Shouldn't the visionary humanitarian global movement strive to match their capacity? Why should we reach for anything less?

About the Author



Bruce Schuman is an Internet systems developer and database programmer with a background in cognitive science and epistemology. His interests include interfaith and intercultural understanding and the relationship of science and religion. In the context of global transition, he wants to explore the development of integral and cross-sector networks that can interconnect traditionally independent elements of human thinking. Bruce believes that the process of globalization is driving the emergence of universal ideas, perhaps including an emerging new “integral paradigm” that defines the complete spectrum of human understanding within a single framework.



Mimi Stokes

Having read Paul Raskin's essay, and the many thoughtful, earnest, insightful, poetic, responses to "the problem of action," I would like to add just one thing: a new idea of the act and task of a global citizens movement to motivate and inspire action, that I think can be the basis for developing an integrated praxis. I offer my idea of the act, and a possible integrated praxis based on it.

My proposed integrated praxis begins with a radically different perspective on what the problem of action is, and redefining the "task," i.e., the action mandate. Raskin defines the problem of action and the task as the following: "For all the important work now underway, we have collectively fallen short of nurturing a systemic change agent matched to the task of planetary transformation. The search is still on for this critical actor missing from the global stage."

"Planetary transformation" is not a definition of a task, an act, that most people believe they have the agency to do, individually and collectively. Planetary transformation is something that God, evolution, superheroes, and—maybe—Wonder Woman could do. I think the problem of action is failing to define the act of the Great Transition in terms that people believe they have the agency and power to do.

"Nurturing a systemic change agent" begins with offering an idea of an act that ordinary, real, living human beings believe they have the agency to do, and, the critical dimension, an act that people deeply *desire* to do. Nurturing a systemic change agent begins with *motivation*: Why would an ordinary, real, living human being *want* to attempt the daunting task of "planetary transformation"? In the language of the marketplace, what's in it for me?

Nurturing motivation to act also requires following the rules for effective social movement rhetoric. According to sociologist and climate change communicator Robert Brulle, the language that works to activate and inspire social movements must be a rhetoric of "nightmare and dream," with the

nightmare a present nightmare—not a future one, as in the global scenarios; and the dream a viable, desirable, utopian vision that is a “great attractor,” to use Raskin’s language. The utopian dream must be bold and irresistible, have such force, power, and desirability, that activists are willing to lay their lives on the line to make this *irresistible* utopian vision become reality.

I find the beginning of an irresistible dream and new invitation and mission for a global citizens movement in a comment Raskin made in a personal conversation a few years ago. We were speaking about the theory of dramatic, transformational change developed in the Hellenistic Amphitheatre, and how it might apply to the Great Transition. I offered the theatrical metaphor of this dramatic theory developed in the Amphitheatre in the deep past as a “rehearsal” for now. He responded—I paraphrase—“I think it has all been a rehearsal. All human history, everything, has been a rehearsal for now.”

I find this idea stunning, inspiring, and uplifting. Hamlet, or rather Shakespeare, famously said, “The readiness is all.” The bold notion that *all our human ancestors* have been preparing *all of us* to be “ready” for our historical moment, the idea that all human history has been a “great rehearsal” for *now*, fills me with a sense of agency. I feel a wave of invisible ancestral support from all the humans who have lived on earth before me. Perhaps more important, this inspired idea that all human history has been preparing for right now, for this historical moment in the long epic drama of human life on earth when I happen to be alive, lifts me out of my despair over how tragically my culture, The West, has acted and is acting. The *felt sense* that all the human ancestors before us have prepared us all to meet this moment, that we have been prepared for the tragic planetary now we are in that demands and requires inspired, transformational, life-giving action, gives me a sense of hope and faith in my powers of agency. That is to say, I *find agency here*, in this idea of all our human ancestors preparing us for *now*.

Practicing modern shamans say that only those who honor their ancestors will survive these times. So I say, let us honor our ancestors by *acting on*, and *acting with*, all the knowledge, wisdom, and insight that all our human ancestors have developed about—and this, I think, is the key to it all—*how humans thrive on earth*. As I see it, “what” all our human ancestors have “rehearsed” in the “great rehearsal for now” is a vast body of *eudaimonic* wisdom about the qualities and attributes of “the human who thrives”; the rules for actors in cultural and living systems to generate human thriving; the rules for human actors in the great, Gaian, panoramic Commons, to secure and assure the thriving of the Commons on

which human thriving entirely depends; practical wisdom about how to act to thrive through “tragic fates” and tragic states, wisdom about human resilience, and evolutionary wisdom about how to act to succeed at evolutionary process, and keep the human species thriving through and flourishing forward for many living human generations.

We would prove Shakespeare’s Puck right a thousand times over about what “fools mortals be” if we did not avail ourselves of all this eudaimonic, evolutionary wisdom developed by all our human ancestors who have lived before us. The amazing thing—at least, I am amazed by it—is that we can avail ourselves of all this pan-cultural, eudaimonic wisdom. We are living at a unique moment in human history when a variety of factors have led to us being able, for the first time in human history, to tap into this vast reservoir of pan-cultural, ancestral, eudaimonic wisdom about *Thrivegenesis*, to coin a word, the attributes, qualities, actions, rules for actors, and evolutionary creative adaptations, to generate and regenerate human thriving on earth.

I suggest that the new “invitation to action” for the global citizens movement is in this stunning idea that all human history has been preparing for this moment, right now. We have a once-in-humanity chance to create global thriving for everyone and everything, and all the humans who have lived before us have developed all the knowledge and wisdom we need to succeed at creating global thriving for all, and all the humans who will live after us will be grateful and glad we used all that wisdom and knowledge.

That is the beginning of an irresistible dream and invitation to act, and the foundation of a “carpe diem,” seize the moment, global activism of acting on, and with, all the pan-cultural eudaimonic knowledge and wisdom that is uniquely accessible to us all, now, for the first time in human history.

I suggest that the definition of the *transitional act* is acting on, and acting with, all the eudaimonic wisdom available to us, that is, the gift of all the human ancestors who have gone before us.

I suggest that the “ideological foundation” for an integrated praxis for the Great Transition be a fusion and synergy of relevant modern Western science that pertains to human thriving, and this vast body of pan-cultural, ancestral eudaimonic wisdom about the human who thrives and thrivegenic cultures. I suggest that the GTI play the role of the convener and “gatherer” of all this pan-cultural eudaimonic ancestral wisdom and relevant modern science.

Further, within this vast body of eudaimonic wisdom are a variety of strategies for overcoming despair and paralysis, that include ritual, art, spiritual practices, therapeutic, psychological interventions, and, within my own range of knowledge, two forms of political activism specifically designed to overcome despair. Naming all these strategies is beyond the reach of this post; the point is for GTI to gather them together as part of its integrated praxis of “the pragmatics of hope.”

I suggest a strategic use of the existing global scenarios in the form of a map, and possibly even an app, in which GTI tracks *the acts* in real time that are putting us on a tragic trajectory toward the nightmare scenarios, acts taken, and acts to take, that have the vital, salutary power to put us on the thrivegenic trajectory that all our human ancestors have prepared us for. A map/app that includes acts being done in real time, and uploads possible acts, “what if we *do this*” actions, catalytic, game-changing acts of reversing our tragic planetary now, and generating and regenerating global thriving for all, fulfilling the universal, common human dream and desire for joyful existence, and a felt sense of gratitude to live in this beautiful biosphere, this one place in the whole cosmic galaxy where, so far as we know, renewal, revival, and regeneration happens. Where spring happens.

I, for one, do not want to lose the joy and wonder of spring.

About the Author



Mimi Stokes is an award-winning playwright who focuses on the intersection of sustainability and drama. She is a certified practitioner of playback theater, an improvisational community building method in which actors “play back” the real-life experiences of members of a community, dignifying individual emotional truths. She currently is developing *The Dran Model*, a drama-based theory and practice of cultural evolution and sustainable social change.



Sandra Waddock

Paul Raskin's essay "How Do We Get There?" represents a significant call to action for the GTI community and well beyond. While disclaimers that we don't know how such change will happen are pervasive, there are some things that we do know when we consider the nature of the systems that actually need to change. Maybe it is time to simply start making whatever shifts we can from wherever we are in the system. Let me explain why that seems both feasible and important.

Over the past year, I have attended a number of conferences on system change. Ultimately, it became clear that, at least collectively, we actually do have much of the knowledge needed to at least begin making the shift. Some of what is needed, of course, is the will to change. Beyond that, if we understand the nature of the systems to be changed as complex and fraught with wicked problems, we can recognize the dynamic, interactive nature of human and ecological systems and work within that understanding. We can also begin to recognize that there is no way that "planned change"—and certainly not planned change on a global scale—is realistic. Then individually and collectively, we can begin to think about how to generate the many experiments, initiatives, and different efforts on the part of people all over the world that will be needed to generate system change. That is, I think, what Paul Raskin means by a global citizens movement.

Briefly, the systems that need to change are inherently complex (complex adaptive systems) and are inherently fraught with wicked problems like climate change, inequality, discrimination, and political divisiveness, to name a few. Complex systems and wicked problems share the following characteristics. First, they are open-ended with no clear beginnings or endings, and are intricately and multiply connected with other issues and problems from which they cannot be successfully teased apart. Second, they have multiple (many) stakeholders who very likely have different ideas about the causes, possible solutions, means to resolve the problems, and what would constitute a good solution. Third, there is path dependency, meaning that once a plan or initiative is put into motion, there is no going back to the original state.

The key understanding that emerges from thinking about large system change in the context of wickedness and complexity is that in such systems, change can at best be guided—not planned. Since all stakeholders are unlikely to agree (e.g., on problem definition, means of resolution, or even end points), the chances that there is a single framework or vision that can incorporate the “full potential of our moment,” seems unlikely. At the same time, a more holistic sense of the oneness of the planet and all of its inhabitants, including all people, of course, but also all of the other living beings that connect in the web of life, can potentially “give life” to initiatives aimed at shifting the system. In that sense, a new story that we tell ourselves about what it means to be human today is vitally important. Equally important is that the story be able to connect with and reach very different peoples, in very different circumstances, all around the planet, so that everyone can participate—as they wish and are able—in the change process, and so that everyone can develop an understanding of the story that suits their purposes.

What then stimulates change? At the core of change is changing the stories that we tell ourselves, something that David Korten captures in his book title *Change the Story, Change the World*. Below the story or narrative, however, are the foundational memes out of which the stories and narratives are constructed that are vitally important—and frequently overlooked in the change process. Memes, as Susan Blackmore has documented, are the core units of culture. They include commonly occurring and replicating words, phrases, images, symbols, technologies (think smart phones), and even art (think the iconic Wall Street bull and more recent “Fearless Girl” statues).

Memes that resonate broadly provide a foundation for change because people can adapt them for their own uses while they simultaneously provide a sort of common language and metric. A (reasonably) shared set of memes could potentially provide a foundation that allows us, wherever we are in what Steve Waddell calls the change system, to create new stories that speak to local needs, initiatives, capacities, and capabilities—and that could potentially merge into what Raskin calls a global citizens movement.

If I am correct, then part of what is needed to shift human systems is a change in memes. Today’s dominant memes and the story they construct are largely about economics, at least in the Western and developed world. That “story” tells us that we humans are rational, that we are profit maximizers, that we have markets that are and need to be “free,” and that government should, as the Reagan-era

phrase went, “stay off our backs.” It is that view of humanity that could shift if we recognize that we are one with each other, intimately connected to other people. Such a perspective recalls *Ubuntu*, the pan-African notion of “I am because we are,” where the “we” encompasses all living beings. That new understanding intimately connects us as humanity to the planet itself—to nature—rather than divorcing us from nature’s realities, potentialities, and constraints.

Indeed, what is needed is a social movement. As with all social movements, we need to recognize that the “movement” will look different in different contexts because the issues, needs, and interdependencies differ depending on circumstances. That is the nature of complexly wicked systems. Proposed solutions will also differ, and that needs to be okay. Foundational memes, perhaps the ones articulated by the Humanistic Management Network of dignity, well-being, and flourishing for all, maybe enhanced with the type of freedom articulated by Amartya Sen, i.e., a freedom to live up to one’s capabilities, and an understanding the we humans are “of nature” and hence intimately bound to her, could provide a starting place for creating new stories that can be adapted to the local context. Using memes that support end states of well-being, dignity, and flourishing for all, or some alternative commonly agreed set of memes, various actors in different places can tell stories or create their own elaborated and uniquely crafted narratives based on a common set of visions, goals, or values that guide the many different local, regional, national, and even global initiatives by actors in a wide variety of settings that will be needed to bring about systemic change.

It is possible that there could be a gentler way, and that would certainly be my preference. But maybe we do need the darkest hour before the dawn.

About the Author



Sandra Waddock is Professor of Management, Galligan Chair of Strategy, and Carroll School Scholar of Corporate Responsibility at Boston College Carroll School of Management. She has published more than 180 papers and chapters and sixteen books on issues ranging from corporate responsibility to management education to her current interests in system transformation and stewardship. She is the winner of multiple lifetime achievement awards, including the 2016 Lifetime Achievement CSR Award from Humboldt University and a 2017 PRME Pioneer Award, among others. Her latest book is *Catalyzing Transformation: Making System Change Happen*.



John Wood

Paul Raskin asks about what is needed to create a global citizens movement (GCM). In my dissertation, “Unity Alongside Diversity: The Qualitative Assessment of the Movement of Movements’ Capacity to Unite,” which is now turning ten years old, I called for a new empowerment strategy that engages activists who hold different worldviews to work together and align. I analyzed 55 social movement organizations (SMOs) in the Anti-Globalization Movement. From my more recent observance of the Occupy Movement, not a whole lot has changed structurally.

I found that what I call the “Movement of movements” was in a state of thin unity, largely focused on single issues, fighting tactical turf battles, and with a deficiency of trust, all of which are fueled by a competition for scarce resources. However, the common ground I empirically found among SMOs in regard to grievances, values, enemies, and relationship building can provide bridges to uniting with a deeper and robust unity.

Every relationship is in tension between and among those who differ on what problems they perceive plague them and what to do to alleviate their specific situation(s). For example, the Zapatistas reject a politics based on the control of the state or a desire to hold power over others; they instead seek to participate in the creation of a new type of “world capable of holding many worlds.”¹ While the Zapatistas are not above tensions among themselves on whether they should follow the path of isolation or not, their contribution to social movement theory is a pragmatic implementation of Foucault’s multiplicity of resistances that challenge the notion of one right way to perceive an alternative world. This means multiplicity goes beyond the Movement of movements and opens up the inclusion of every group that resists oppression of any kind with the desire to align with other groups to enhance its mobilization potential.

In every collectivity, activists are embedded within the twin strands of autonomy and solidarity. Finding the right balance between competing interests is paramount. Tensions arise between social movement organizations (SMOs), not because they have followed the wrong course, but because we live in a difficult and contradictory world. We, therefore, need a shift of metaphors within social movement scholarship, where, what I call, the “Relational Empowerment Strategy” is a democratic ideal. This strategy is not charged to build a house; instead, it is a conversation to be had. It is not a blueprint for action, the way a draftsman plots a building’s construction, but alternatively, it creates a framework, forcing people into a conversation, a way to deliberate across difference and systematize a method to visualize a shared future. This strategy provides space for a deliberative democracy where SMOs must engage and test their ideas against an external reality, persuading others to their point of view, shifting alliances of consent. The process forces SMOs to persuade, but not coerce. It forces SMOs to examine their own point of view and entertain the possibility that they are not always right. It challenges SMOs to examine their motives and interests constantly and suggests that their own activists’ individual and collective points of view are simultaneously legitimate and fallible.

This new empowerment theory has four parts. First, I theorize that movement actors associated with SMOs must view the world as complex and oppressions as interrelated. Second is restoring a sense of autonomy or capability to the individual SMO in balance with a collective social justice of the Movement of movements as a whole. The third part is a balance between an organic and mechanical decision-making structure and tactical opposition to power. The fourth part utilizes deliberation as a way to transform conflict, balancing the aforementioned two parts. This deliberation is facilitated through reframing of grievances, tactics, and visions through values in the context of organizing.

The Relational Empowerment Strategy goes beyond a simple allies-versus-enemies approach based on fear, fueling a self-fulfilling prophecy. The strategy is built instead on activists’ deeper, once unarticulated hopes and imagination through free spaces with consistent deliberation that allows for ambiguity, empathy through recognition, and communication of values and visions. From the articulation of shared hopes and dreams to that of collective fears emerges shared ground—our humanity. This strategy is a beginning, shifting empowerment from a stance focused on taking power over to an emphasis on sharing power with. This new emphasis on the latter is important in creating a concatenation, or a linking of chains of equivalence, among SMOs in working relationships of a division of labor. The former power-over relationship leaves movements fragmented in competition

with the goal to take power from others. So, far this strategy has failed to gain traction; therefore, a new empowerment strategy is paramount in challenging power with a balanced focus on reflexive identity within a political space. A power-with relationship is a positive power, one that considers agenda and coalition-building associations vital but without leaving uniqueness behind. Therefore, this empowerment strategy takes the long view in which activists can strive to obtain an emboldened unity that flourishes alongside a multifaceted diversity.

Endnotes

1. Alex Khasnabish, "The International Order of Hope: Zapatismo and the Fourth World War," in *Indigenous Peoples and Autonomy: Insights for a Global Age*, eds. Mario Blaser, Ravi de Costa, Deborah McGregor, and William Coleman (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 221-240.

About the Author



John Wood is an associate professor of public administration in the MPA program at the University of Central Oklahoma. He teaches about leadership, policy, management, and sustainability on the local level, themes he explored in his dissertation "Unity Alongside Diversity: The Qualitative Assessment of the Movement of Movements' Capacity to Unite." He is the former vice mayor of Guthrie, Oklahoma and the former chair of Guthrie's finance and street committees. In addition to his teaching and service, Wood published the edited volume *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in State & Local Government*, as well as 13 peer-reviewed articles in areas of government ethics, public administration and environmental policy. He holds a PhD in Environmental Policy & Conflict Management from Oklahoma State University.



Author's Response



Response to Comments

An Intermezzo

Normally, GTI roundtables close with an “author’s response” that gives the essayist the last word. In this case, however, my kick-off note was meant as a scene-setting stimulant (mission accomplished), not a formal essay needing a formal response. So I would like to chime in here with just a few brief remarks as intermezzo (not coda), with the hope that the music will resume and play on in different melodies and venues.

My note “How Do We Get There? The Problem of Action” elicited an awesome outpouring of comments, which are sampled in this Roundtable. Taken together, they constitute a book-length compilation of insight, inspiration, and guidance. The wide spectrum of approaches and sensibilities that the discussion elicited reflects the multi-faceted challenge we confront. After all, the question of planetary praxis has no “right answer”—only kaleidoscopic working hypotheses to be pursued and revised, all the while alert to opportunities for complementarity and synergy.

Our differences seem minor compared to what we share: the restless search for ways to build a popular constituency for a GT. Sure, some of us, wary of top-down domination or bottom-up incoherence, tilt toward more local or more encompassing emphases. Yet the truth is that there’s no need to polarize these spheres of engagement. They are different facets of a world that unfolds as nested systems of semi-autonomous arenas of social reality and struggle, all the way down and all the way up. Or along a different axis, some give primacy to issues of class or environment or injustice or culture, but few among us would gainsay that these are dimensions of an overarching systemic crisis and transformation.

What do we mean by a “global citizens movement” (GCM)? Perhaps because we have a broad consensus, or perhaps because the concept is nebulous, there wasn’t much socio-political

commentary on historical agency. I think it's worth remembering that all the great social shifts of the past were carried forward by social actors responding to—and created by!—crises and opportunities of the prevailing system. A rising bourgeoisie brought the modern capitalist era; the proletariat it spawned drove the early struggles for socialism. Patriots fought for nation-states; anti-colonialists, for independence. Oppressed minorities and women battled for rights, dignity, and justice.

In this century, the Modern Era is cracking, while a portentous new act in the drama of social evolution has begun. What new social actor might move to center stage to redirect history toward a decent Earthland? The key to understanding the contours of a GCM and acting on its behalf lies in the distinctive feature of this century—the binding of all people, indeed all life, into a single community of fate.

A systemic movement would arise from and for this community. It would carry forward the liberatory legacies of the past, while embedding them in a framework that transcends fault lines etched by class, place, species, belief system, and DNA. Like it or not, the possibility of a GT rests with the emergence of a planetized outer layer of social reality and cultural identity. (Lest I be misread, I hasten to stress “outer layer,” that is, a cosmopolitanism that does not dissolve subglobal layers.)

Can the disenfranchised citizens of the failed state of Earthland come together with sufficient dynamic unity of purpose? What actions can hasten the coalescence of a GCM? How do we inspire planetary patriots to participate in, what we might call (with tongue slightly in cheek), an Earthland Popular Front?

While there are no metaphoric silver bullets or magic wands, the commentary offered an impressive array of ideas of where to focus and what to do. “How Do We Get There?” suggested that a consequential movement “would assert power culturally, by shaping ideas and behavior; tactically, through actions that disrupt the status quo; and strategically, by building institutions for sustained political influence.” Correspondingly, the discussion generated a repertoire of approaches across these three prongs, reminding us of the need to honor and pursue plural points of leverage. Still, we do need processes for finding common ground that accentuate trust, solidarity, and collective action and mitigate the accentuation of differences.

I remain convinced that we need to muster the courage now to build organizational structures for absorbing, amplifying, and channeling the rising oppositional energy sure to be sparked by

deepening crises ahead. If such organizing structures remain weak and fragmentation persists, chaos and dislocation will ignite ever more powerful reactionary ideologies and forces. Then, I fear, dreaded scenarios, whether Orwellian or Hobbesian, will haunt the story of this century.

Cornel West writes somewhere that “to live is to wrestle with despair yet never give despair the last word.” So let the last word go to an old labor anthem: solidarity forever.